

Social Studies and the Social Order: Telling Stories of Resistance

By Douglas McKnight & Prentice Chandler

For a century, the field of social studies has told a story that has framed its function and situated its identity within the broader narrative of America's cultural order. The narrative of social studies has been structured by significant tensions and questions considered necessary to address in service of the field's chosen task. This mission and responsibility has included performing the role of storyteller of the historical meaning of America, as well as educator of democratic citizens able to participate in the maintenance of this metanarrative.

Douglas McKnight is an associate professor of curriculum studies and foundations in the School of Education at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Prentice Chandler is an assistant professor of secondary education in the College of Education at Athens State University, Athens, Alabama.

A basic plot line for the social studies field has been dictated by the National Council of the Social Studies (NCSS) standards (2002): A “*purpose of the social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.*” In other words, the social studies, as the most inclusive of all of the school disciplines (Ross, 2006), is the academic discipline to create a competent democratic citizenry able to sustain America’s place within the historical story of the world. Such a notion is not self-explanatory. Defining a competent democratic citizen depends on

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one's position within a wide ideological register bounded by two extremes: From a revisionist philosophical position, a citizen is one who disrupts and resists all forms and systems of oppression (Ellis, 2001; Hursh & Ross, 2000) so that America can live up to its historical and moral claims as a democracy interested in justice and equality; to a more traditional, conservative perspective in which a citizen is one who accepts a given socio-cultural position and gives unquestioned support to those leaders perceived as capable of preserving America's role in the grand march of history (Ellis, 2001). However, every point along the register contains various perspectives and mixtures in relation to extremes.

Because the meaning of "democratic citizen" is interpretable, embedded within the story of social studies has been a irresolvable dialectical tension: to not only transmit the so-called facts of the larger cultural narrative of America by way of history, political science, sociology, geography, psychology, economics, and so forth, but to also develop a citizenry that can act upon the world to change and reform it by resisting oppressive and inequitable anti-democratic conditions (Stanley & Nelson, 1994; Hursh & Ross, 2000). Shaver (1981) clearly identifies this tension for the social studies when he asks the question: "How can the school contribute to the continuity of the society by preserving and passing on its traditions and values while also contributing to appropriate social change by helping youth to question current social forms and solutions"? (p. 125) This dialectical tension—one side continually responding to and playing off the other—has encouraged and sustained a healthy, if not intense, dialogue, which has prevented a closure in the meaning of "democratic citizen."

However, since 9/11, the anxiety over alleged national threats to the "American way" has elevated. The pressure on the social studies to pull back from the social transformative aspect of the tension has been palpable. The situation has been compounded by a shift in the language employed by federal and state governments to govern the story and resolve the tension. The discourse of accountability, defined by technocratic and political concerns rather than democratic and philosophical ones (Giroux, 2001), has been imposed on those laboring within the social studies. This condition also risks a resolution of the tension within the story in favor of a simplistic social transmission of so-called technical facts of American history in an effort to sanitize the narrative (Richardson, 2000). Such an overly conservative approach submerges controversy, resistance, and outright moments of revolution in favor of dates, timelines, cause and effect mentality, wars, and political documents that fail to produce ethical discussions about decisions made and about groups affected adversely by those decisions. In this new technocratic narrative, marginalized peoples are not represented as agents of change, but are those that history acts upon. Social ills are presented only as issues confronted and quickly fixed somewhere in the past. Stanley and Longwell (2004) identify the troublesome nature of this discourse:

This 'official social studies knowledge' includes an emphasis on a market system as coterminous with a democratic society, the celebratory and progressive historic

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narrative of United States and Western civilization, and a presentation of the social sciences as a glorification of the progressive triumph of the dominant U.S. neoliberal economic, political, and social ideals and institutions. (p. 211)

In fact, even as NCSS produces literature and standards in a rhetorical effort to develop a critical thinking democratic citizenry, it has simultaneously aligned itself to the policies of the latest anti-democratic educational legislative reform fiasco called *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. *NCLB* utilizes the logic of standards and assessments to control the curriculum, thoughts and activities of those involved in institutional schooling, including teacher education programs. The legislation also sets teachers and students up to fail as it forces all to achieve at an impossible level (Ross, Gabbard, Kesson, Mathison, & Vinson, 2005).

In effect, in order to be “politically” relevant and not completely ignored in Washington, D.C., NCSS has found itself willing to bend its mission to fit within the constraints of the *NCLB*. However, in shifting its language to fit the technocratic concerns of accountability, testing and assessment that homogenizes the historical narrative (McKnight & Robinson, 2006; Richardson, 2000), many K-12 and university social studies educators may find the technocratic approach unappealing and even contrary to the mission of educating a democratic citizenry and preparing a new generation of social studies educators and researchers. To (re)present American history as something that can be transmitted neutrally and without controversy is worrisome for those in the social studies who work to tell alternative stories that preserve the dialectical tension. A question must be addressed: What is the role of social studies education in a political atmosphere in which a technocratic discourse threatens to undermine the very democratic institutions that social studies is supposed to uphold and criticize? And when the current social ideologies have the effect of marginalizing groups of people and creating inequities among groups based on one’s race, class, or gender, then, according to the historical study of social studies, the profession must begin to confront those effects. The social studies profession has always been at its weakest in dealing with the analysis of racism and class (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Marshall, 2001), and the new technocratic atmosphere and discourse generated by *NCLB* will serve to make such analysis completely absent, despite the rhetoric of NCSS standards. Such state of affairs demands that the social studies intensify its own dialogue about its story and responsibilities.

With this in mind, we wish to tell the specific stories of a social studies teacher in a small Alabama town and another of a university professor at a large university in Alabama. These stories provide a counter narrative to current socio-political milieu, as well as offer some possible approaches to resisting the technocratic discourse. However, they are also cautionary tales of the risks, complications, and consequences of engaging in such acts of resistance. In other words, the stories speak of an experience with historical heresy, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls heterodoxy—the act of putting forth a history that challenges the status quo, complete with its requisite problematic (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). The first story

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is a brief recounting of the conflict faced by a university professor when teaching about resistance.

Teaching One To Teach A Different Story, and Getting Resisted

I teach both undergraduate and graduate social studies classes at a state university in Alabama. The courses have been guided by a critical, philosophical perspective, in which I attempt to teach students about the dialectical tension within the social studies. As they were generally well indoctrinated in the traditional facts-based conservative perspective, I introduced the students to the idea that history is not a politically neutral story that involves merely dates, facts, wars, and legislation, but also race, class, gender, and disability issues that are generally ignored in high school history, government, and free enterprise (economics) texts. The students would then read, write about, and discuss critical theory and social studies texts presenting alternative perspectives to the teaching of the social studies (e.g. Ross, 2001; Foner, 1997). In my first couple of years of teaching, the students generally listened and nodded their heads as if they understood. After several weeks of this, I would have them submit a unit plan in which they chose the historical topic and created lesson plans around that topic. Surprisingly, despite my intensive effort to steer them elsewhere, they picked topics representative of the dominant, mainstream discourse of history as a progressive march by way of righteous wars fought and led by “great” White men.

A colleague and I decided to research this phenomena by examining what we perceived as a disconnect between the different kind of historical story that they were being taught, and their impulse to reproduce the traditional narrative of the textbook despite all the available resources available in books and on the Internet. We charted their choices the first semester, which included the use of technology and the Internet as a teaching tool (Robinson & McKnight, 2006). Selections included the usual wars and battles, or particular presidents who served during those wars. The next semester the assignment was changed. We decided to listen to George Counts (1932) and begin with the assumption that education is a form of indoctrination. My students continued to read texts that contest the mainstream narrative of history. I continued to challenge their assumptions and beliefs through dialogue, group projects, and lectures. In addition, the unit plan changed. Students were instructed to search in the library and on the Internet a different kind of topic, one involving any historically marginalized group that could be easily identified as fitting into the “blue box” syndrome. The blue box is where textbook writers place the “add-ons” to the mainstream story of history. The blue boxes are set apart from the narrative, which while highlighting certain African-Americans and women of all colors, also had the effect of accentuating the fact that such people existed outside the dominant narrative.

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The students struggled, wrote biting comments on my evaluations and online chat websites and continued to bring in the usual White-males-in-war topics. Many stated flatly that they were “tired” of “White male bashing.” They said they felt under siege, just wanted the necessary information and were quite happy with the conservative narrative of great men and America as an ordained nation that was good enough for them. However, other students began to branch out and find different sorts of themes, though ones that high school history texts have sanitized and homogenized to fit within the uncontroversial broader historical narrative. For instance, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Tuskegee Airmen became popular topics, as both are represented as either acceptable types of protest or of “mainstream” military interest. I never received a unit plan on Malcolm X, race riots, the phenomena of lynching, or even how workers during the early 1900s fought and died during protests over working conditions. Over time, the assignment was further refined to follow Counts’ (1932) charge that education must force students to confront democratic social issues.

More restrictions were imposed to push the students’ search deeper into American history for acts of resistance by marginalized groups in order to more fully examine the meaning of the American story. However, my students—mostly White males and females—continued and still continue to resist this story of resistance. Or, if they begin to accept the responsibility that for democratic life to persist in America a different story must be told, their field experience during the social studies methods course quickly “sets them straight” and returns them to technocratic story and an impulse to privilege factual information that can be easily “assessed” (re-tested and re-produced). The schools have quickly appropriated the federally intrusive *NCLB* mandate placing emphasis on objective testing and rote memorization of history.

Perhaps the most alarming news about attacks on the social studies (and the way it is conceptualized) comes out of Florida. Governor Jeb Bush signed into law an education bill requiring history classes to be conceptualized in the following way: “American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed”...and shall be viewed as “knowable, teachable, and testable” (Florida Education Omnibus Bill: H.B. 7087e3). In short, this law attempts to standardize the history of the American people by washing away the resistance of some Americans against others who oppressed them. The “facts” of history are different depending on who you ask. The facts of “Manifest Destiny” are very different for the current citizens of the American West than for those living on reservations. For the former, it is a story of heroic exploration; for the other, a story of genocide and theft. The Florida law mandates the closing of the gate of historical interpretation in Florida’s social studies classrooms. This is the panacea for those in power: close interpretation of history and you control the future; expunge any notion of dissent in our history and you control the masses by erasing the past. Objective history is something that we will never fully accomplish (White, 1997), except when it is artificially mandated by bureaucrats who wish to make history “testable.” This is exactly what I watched

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happen to my students (also known as teacher candidates in NCATE language), who were just beginning to become comfortable with the counter narratives and who were attempting to devise ways to tell this story in their field experiences. The pressure was just too great to fall back into the safe, technocratic narrative of American history that never speaks of resistance.

On occasion, my students found spaces and moments to engage in a more critical historical stance. However, their students, more often than not, either refused to listen or would actually, with the help of parents, fight back. However, as the story below will attest to, small victories do occur that provide hope for counter narratives' having a positive effect on how students perceive democratic life and how they fit into the broader social story of America.

Telling Stories of Resistance, Getting Resisted in the Public School

This story unfolded in the “trenches” of the secondary social studies classroom; it reveals the power of the American discourse of American exceptionality and heroification (Loewen, 1995) of our past. It reveals the attempt to universalize the story of this nation, giving students an emaciated version of a rich and powerful story that we should—but don’t—recount about our past.

Essential to the social studies in a fully functioning democracy is the freedom to question, interrogate, criticize, and evaluate the past and the present in order to create a better world by improving the conditions of people unjustly impacted. Academic history and social meliorism, which are two foundational philosophies of the social studies as an academic discipline (Stanley & Nelson, 1994), are prevented by federal legislation and community pressures from combining to form truly critical social studies. For the first six years of my teaching career, I taught middle and high school social studies at a rural K-12 school in northern Alabama. I am now a doctoral student at a state university in Alabama and an assistant professor at a small northern Alabama university. This is a story of how I resisted dominant socio-historical narratives and was subsequently prevented from doing so by my district leadership (Chandler, 2006). Mine was an attempt to give students opposing viewpoints on the history of America, and allow for *crisis* in the classroom (Feldman & Laub, 1992). It was an attempt to confront (and allow students to confront) the “American Ideology” that dominates our education system. This ideology is characterized by an “anti-theoretical, anti-reflexive” stance that is preoccupied with “obtaining” knowledge for some future use (i.e., relevance); it assumed to be neutral, “objective,” and has as its end goal a liberal (i.e., gradual improvement) society that is played out within the rules and frameworks that define and structure the objective world (Wilson, 1977, cited in Giroux, 2001). This gives the impression that social meliorism is occurring under the façade of incremental change while upholding and securing the status quo (i.e., progress = “things are always getting better”).

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This particular ideology is especially important in the state of Alabama. Alabama and its history provide a perfect backdrop to the teaching of social injustice and how ordinary citizens, rather than politicians, can change the status quo by their overt acts of civil disobedience resistance. After all, legislation did not bring an end to *de jure* racial discrimination—martyrs for the cause did. The history of the state of Alabama is a microcosm of how human beings behave and potentially provides a blueprint for how people have acted and how they can, hopefully, live together in some semblance of peace. Alabama and schools in Alabama are in the unique position to serve as an example to the rest of humanity as the world's racial apartheid laboratory. Instead, the epic, rich, and violent story of civil rights and the real conditions of how people were discriminated against are not allowed in the classroom. Instead, Alabamian, Southern, and American histories have been standardized into nice neat sections in state-approved textbooks giving students a tidy picture of uninterrupted progress from Columbus to the present (Loewen, 1995; Zinn, 2005; Brinkley et al, 2005).

During the 2006 school year, I taught 10th and 11th grade American history I and II. I had envisioned the class based on the writings of contemporary social studies and postcolonial theorists: multiple points of view, allowing multiple voices in the classroom, standpoint theory, allowing historical actors to speak for themselves, and having diverse representation (through the material used) in the classroom. My class was organized around two main activities: *Alabama Course of Study* lectures and primary document seminars. The justification for the *ALCOS* lectures was to prepare students for their state mandated graduation exam. The mostly student led student-led seminars were basically structured discussions about primary document readings. As the chair of the social studies department, I bought class sets of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (2005) and the companion volume *Voices of A People's History of the United States* (2004). My intention was to have these alternative histories contrast with the official history/knowledge (Apple, 1999) that one would find in typical, traditional, conservative history textbooks. I chose the works of Zinn because his volumes represent a radical, subaltern, revisionist history that stresses the role that race and class play in our democracy, instead of ignoring their central role (Deloria, 1997; Marable, 2002) in the development of our nation state (Evans, 1996). Racial and class domination, as focal points in American history, have been deleted from our collective historical psyche, leaving us with "atomic individuals, some of whom have bad attitudes" (Mills, 2003, p. 201). Students, when hearing that we would be studying "a different kind" of history, seemed excited about the prospect of learning a history that deals with oppressed people of the world, in contrast to the usual accounts of presidents, diplomats, treaties, and wars.

This was my explicit attempt to teach using a critical, more holistic approach to American history. However, I was not prepared for the backlash from parents holding fast to the traditional, Eurocentric, sanitized, male version of history—a perspective that appears threatened by the voices of indigenous or oppressed groups. I had made

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a point of including documents in the course by conservative intellectuals, including Diane Ravitch's *Democracy Reader* (1992) and her *American Reader* (1990). Every formal lecture that was given in the class came from the state approved curriculum and the class readings were drawn from primary documents collections. I wanted to give my students the opportunity to read at least two distinct interpretations and perspectives to allow the hermeneutic nature of history to be examined; the purpose was to allow students to examine the ways in which history is constructed and the ways in which events are assigned meaning (Whelan, 2001; Washburn, 1997).

The topics in these two classes ranged from pre-Columbian civilizations to the present "War on Terror" being prosecuted by the Bush administration. Every formal lecture was derived from the formal curriculum guidelines set forth by the ALCOS. The primary documents that we read corresponded exactly with the time period under study in my classes. When we studied the American Revolution, we read Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, when we studied Native American removal from their ancestral lands we read their surrender speeches, when we studied the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan during WWII, we read accounts of survivors whose families were exterminated. These readings were to be viewed and used as a supplement to the official account in the state approved textbook, and at no time constituted the curriculum proper in my social studies class.

The first night the books went home with my students, I received a phone call from one set of parents who demanded to know why I had chosen such a radical author as a supplemental reading for my class. The phone call consisted of the parents threatening me and telling me that they did not want their daughter to read this material. After explaining that I wanted to simply give students another version of American history in addition to the state approved textbook, I offered to allow the parents the ability to choose their daughter's reading material for the class; they refused. I offered to allow her to do *no* outside readings for this *advanced* history class; again they refused. They made it clear that they did not want anyone in the class reading "this type" of history. Zinn's (2005) description of Native marriage customs was used to justify their stance against his work. Over the phone, they read the part that they found so abhorrent:

Marriage laws are non-existent: men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please, without offense, jealousy, or anger. They multiply in great abundance; pregnant women work to the last minute and give birth almost painlessly; up the next day, they bathe in the river and are as clean and healthy as before giving birth. If they tire of their men, they give themselves abortions with herbs that force stillbirths, covering their shameful parts with leaves or cotton cloth; although on the whole, Indian men and women look upon total nakedness with as much casualness as we look upon a man's head or his hands. (p. 5)

I could not decide if it was the study of Native culture that upset them or the fact that sex and abortion were discussed in this first person account from Bartolomé de las Casas; after all, the topics of *Roe v. Wade* and abortion were in this state

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approved textbook. In addition to this specific passage, they expressed concerns over the rest of the material in Chapter One of Zinn's history by stating, "all this talks about is how we *supposedly* killed all of the Indians..." (Zinn, 2005, p. 17). They seemed unaware that European invaders forcibly took the land that *they now own* and that they were the beneficiaries of terrorism and genocide (Murrin, 1990). Over the next week, this set of parents pressured the district leadership into removing these books from this advanced, college preparatory course for what they considered inappropriate, radical, subversive content. For the rest of the semester, Zinn's seminal social history and the collection of primary documents in *Voices* sat on my shelves, unused.

Over the course of the semester, the same set of parents continued to oppose the teaching of excerpts from this book. Since the ALCOS calls for the teaching of primary documents, I used *excerpts* from *Voices*. Upon hearing that Zinn (2004) was the editor who compiled these excerpts, the parents called for my removal from the classroom. I was accused of brainwashing students and was threatened with damning media coverage if I did not stop. I faced the task of teaching the official knowledge that was found in the state mandated history text while simultaneously resisting the formal curriculum by teaching the voices of oppressed people in our history. I was attempting to "recover the space of the teacher as an oppositional intellectual rather than as dutiful technician or de-skilled corporate drone" in the classroom (Giroux, 2001, p. xxii).

Over the course of the semester, my students began to openly question the accounts of events read in our textbooks. One student asked about the ways in which the rest of the world, particularly the areas that have fallen under the sway of the American "empire," view the United States. This type of education is practically impossible unless students are allowed to read and discuss the documents written by the people prosecuting war and by those suffering in that war. We have to interrogate what sort of educational intent omits the complicated interactions (Willis, 2001; Santora, 2001) America has had with the rest of the world. Without allowing for both sides of these types of stories, students are left with the notion that we are disliked around the world because of myriad of reasons: jealousy, our freedom, our power, etc.—all of which ignore the historical realities that stem from America's hegemonic efforts. Without studying these exchanges relative to North America, students are prevented from understanding how, "Africans were not reduced simply to units of labor and Indians were not simply driven west but that both peoples were part of a dynamic interaction with Europeans out of which early American culture emerged" (Nash, 2000, p. 114).

After being ordered to stop using so-called "radical" primary documents in the advanced history class, my students engaged in a form of classroom civil disobedience by attempting to shelve the state approved textbooks. This came about after reading and discussing David Thoreau's famous essay, *Civil Disobedience*, in which he rails against those who were indirectly contributing to the war

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machine in the Mexican War. One student explained his actions this way: "This is like when Thoreau was upset at the factories in the north for buying southern cotton...by buying it (the cotton) they were helping slavery...if we read this stuff (the textbook) and don't read the other (documents) we are doing the same thing" (P. Chandler, personal communication, April 4, 2006). Surprisingly, these students were actively implementing the ideas of Thoreau in my classroom by refusing to take part in something that they saw as unjust. The parents who had pressured the superintendent into removing Zinn's social history from our class insisted that I had caused this episode and that I had told students to not do their work. This charge assumes that students are not capable of reading protest literature and acting upon it. My students were simply doing what social educators hope their students will do: apply what they have learned in class to real world applications.

By the end of the school year, those who opposed my curriculum and pedagogical practices demanded that I teach with more *balance* in the classroom. Balance for this group meant a return to the comfortable Eurocentric, male-dominated, capitalistic celebrating, anti-immigrant story that functions to homogenize alternative voices and actions of resistance and dissent. I interpreted this call as essentially an attack on the subaltern of American history arising from a deep impulse to reproduce the dominant cultural narrative serving to protect one American group while silencing and marginalizing the stories of others. Such a monological story does damage to the needs of a democracy and its continued existence because it serves the need of a technocratic form of existence rather than a democratic one.

Theorizing Technocratic Reproduction of the Story

A common theme within these two stories is that of technological rationalism and reproduction, meaning that students *engage in acts of reproduction the moment they enter into the institution of schooling* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000; Bowers 1988; Gitlin, 1996; Labaree, 1992).

Technocratic refers to broad systems of administrative control that sustain institutional currency and power through an association to scientific expertism by claiming rationalized, effective and efficient manipulation of modern life even while claiming an allegiance to democratic activity (Bowers, 1988; Feenberg, 1999). As much critical theory and historical research has illustrated, these categories have been institutionalized within and perpetuated by schools and colleges of education (Gitlin, 1996; Labaree, 1992; McKnight, 2004). In turn, these categories have filtered to public schools and have been reproduced by teacher and student alike in ways that can foreclose on other possible voices that approach criticalness from a much different space and understanding. Students embody criteria constitutes the explicit privileged forms of textbook knowledge as information and easily gravitate, when involved in classroom or homework activities, toward replicating this type of information without being directed. This reproduction is what has made the ap-

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propriation of the technocratic discourse of *NCLB* so easy by state governmental departments of education, as well as, local schools.

The belief is that such achievement indicates that the student will be able to engage in data-driven decision making, meaning that he or she possesses skills to access, manipulate and store the massive amount of data that is being produced. This technical skill has become the focus of much social studies research and has resulted in the exclusion/omission of the ethical and philosophical questions of how such technocratic reasoning and reproduction affects how we perceive and engage in the world (Bowers, 1988; Bromley, 1998; Feenberg, 1992, 1999; Giroux, 2001; Levin, 1998; Postman, 1993; Santora, 2001; Zambon, 2003). When a technical skill becomes the focus, issues of democratic agency are reduced and the individual becomes governed by norms concerned with control rather than freedom. Feenberg (1999) identified this condition within certain American institutions: “In medicine, education, and administration, technical devices prescribe norms to which the individual is tacitly committed by organizational belonging. Technocracy is the use of technical delegations to conserve and legitimate an expanding system of hierarchical control” (p. 75), which in turn reduces citizenship to the simple act of voting. An effect of this, according to Feenberg (1999) is that the public sphere fades and a “literal reign of silence is instituted as one-way communication replaces dialogue and debate throughout society.... The fundamental problem of democracy today is quite simply the survival of agency in this increasingly technocratic universe” (p.76).

A democratic citizenry dependent on such technocratic and explicit forms of knowledge is open to receive but an impoverished narrative of America. In fact, such dependency inevitably leads to a loss of implicit, local knowledge that constitutes so much of our daily, cultural existence: those “unspoken rules that govern the use of different language systems—spoken, body, space, time and so forth—to changes in social context, performing skills and pursuing activities” (Bowers, 1988, p. 8). This implicit, local knowledge is where the ethical nature of whatever story we tell exists and where educators must travel in order to go beyond a mere reproduction of one cultural narrative. Such implicit knowledge functions to preserve the many cultural voices that give American democracy its diversity and, hence, its staying power, and resists the rationalistic reduction of democratic life to the manipulating and disseminating of information produced by a small elite group in the various disciplines accepted as legitimate. The effect of this is that the many diverse voices that inhabit and infuse cyberspace with true democratic potential are blocked to teacher candidates, teachers and students (Bowers, 1988). Instead of a tapestry of diverse voices seeking solutions through alternative discourses and cultural ways called for by Santora (2001), such dependence on technological approaches that have heretofore privileged a data-driven democracy actually produce the sort of citizen Stanley and Whitson (1993) problematizes:

More and more we have adjusted to a culture dominated by expert opinion while our confidence in our own abilities to make complex social judgments continues

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to erode.... Life appears so complex that the average person abandons political action for personal development and survival. ... Citizenship is reduced to surviving, following rules, and occasionally voting. (Stanley & Whitson, p. 58)

This individual may become technically proficient at accessing and disseminating information, but is unable to understand how to interpret subtleties and ambiguities, an act dependent upon the implicit knowledge necessary to navigate the complex set of cultures that constitute America.

If the narrative that we tell our students, both at universities and in K-12 settings, was simply “a story,” then this issue would not be of such importance. The stories we tell and how we tell them—how we conceptualize the story, whose voices are represented, the form that it takes, and the conclusions that the story leaves with our students—have a monumental impact on the way students view the world. If the story is reduced to a list of information flattering to a dominant specific race, class and gender group within our country, then only these students are left with a sense of privilege and arrogance that merely serves to blind them from societal injustice in the name of merit and self-worth. The narrative of benevolent actions by our government gives students the false impression that the American symbol and its requisite benefits are somehow their birthright, that it has always been this way and that alternative ways of thinking and being are beyond the realm of discussion. Inculcation of militant nationalism thwarts any attempt at critical thinking within the social studies (Nelson, 1996). The social studies curriculum, delivered through the dominant techno-rationalist discourse (Giroux, 2001), serves to create and foreclose the meanings that students (social actors) can make relative to their social universe. Social studies education, conceptualized in this way, serves to preclude critical thinking and the concept of social conflict (Giroux, 2001). This is what Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) called symbolic violence: “Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e., every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations” (p. xv).

Symbolic violence asserts that culturally arbitrary ideas (i.e., whose “story” counts are real historical knowledge) are imposed from power centers in society with the consent of the dominated. These ideas are received as normal and function to foreclose on alternative possibilities. The effect is that social order is maintained. Bourdieu calls the ability to foreclose “other” ways of conceiving the social order the power of “worldmaking power” because it consists of the ability to define for oppressed and oppressor alike, the official and sanctioned version of what the social order is and should be; it is this aspect of symbolic violence that concerns the ability to control groups politically by defining their cosmos (Swartz, 1998).

Bourdieu also used the constructs of *doxa* and *misrecognition* to describe symbolic violence in educational settings. Misrecognition is best thought of as the ways in which social actors come to believe that their social world is natural and obvious (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). It is a form of forgetting that people are

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caught in relational webs that are assigned arbitrary meanings by those with the social and cultural capital available to do so (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Doxa is used to describe participants of a particular field and how they think or conceptualize their field. This is the “set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles and which tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. xi). These theoretical constructs call us to examine and interrogate the arbitrary relational web (i.e. schooling) that allows misrecognition of imperialism and white supremacist discourses to continue unchecked.

In the current political regime in which “terror” has become naturalized as the means by which the administration does what it pleases and wages war where it wants, American education, in general, and social studies, in particular, fails to *interrupt* such naturalizing discourses as American dominance throughout the world. This failure extends to engaging in the kind of social justice that would call into question the discourse of “terror.” What is the doxa of the social studies—the true values that are necessary for our field? This question is not to be confused with past questions about the nature, scope and sequence, and purpose of the social studies (Stanley, 2001). This question is a philosophical one that cuts to the role of how we serve the greater good (Cuban & Shipps, 2000). The field of social studies has, as its foundational obligation, the task of assisting “students in developing insightful knowledge about human issues and practice in critically addressing them” (Nelson & Pang, 2001, p. 152). A techno-rationalist approach that privileges neutrality over values and testability over humanity will not suffice in this mission.

Those questions cannot be addressed until we decide upon the story or stories that we will tell to future generations and the epistemological lens that we utilize in the telling of these stories. This is a question that cuts to the point of why we do what we do: To what end does this story serve humanity? If the answer is simply to instill patriotism or to create good citizens, without defining what a good citizen is, or without broadening this notion to something *other than voting*, then we have failed. After all, Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia had their share of patriotic citizens: surely this project is greater than respect for a symbol. Since there is no “golden age” to which the social studies profession might return (Nelson, 1996), we call for a new era of social studies education (at all levels) predicated on the telling of a different story/stories. What sort of story would be needed to instill in people respect for all humanity regardless of their arbitrary nationality, their race, their language, their gender? This story would have as its basis an examination of the ways in which ordinary people have fought to have their humanity realized and their dignity acknowledged in the face of oppression. This is the story of so many of our students still residing in public schools. As Santora’s (2001) remarks:

Differences in race, class, gender, sexual orientation and faith define contemporary classrooms in ways that challenge white middle class educators’ and students’ traditional assumptions, beliefs, values, knowledge, theories and practices. Critiques

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emanating from the pluralism of marginalized groups challenge the universality, truth-value, fixity, rationality, objectivity and neutrality attributed to Western European and andocentric liberal thought. (p. 151)

Such stories can serve to interrogate the past's structural inequalities, and are starting points of any *critical* social studies curriculum that seeks to sustain the dialectical tension between the various stories of the past, as well as the stories the field of social studies tells of itself. Such counter narratives involve many risks and makes for an uncomfortable social studies teaching existence in which one must confront resistance from administration, other educators, parents and most difficult of all, from students. However, to not engage in such storytelling and counter resistance means a victory for the monologue of the technocratic story, which translates into a diminished form of democracy. Students, especially those who wish to become social studies teachers, must confront and deliberate upon these uncomfortable issues in order to become fully active and reflective democratic citizens in America. Otherwise, such words as "freedom" and "democracy," too often tossed around now to suit whatever political purposes desired, become meaningless.

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